
Title: A Speech, 3/9/2024

Author: Narcissus Bennu

“Hello... uh, hello...”

: coughs a bit to clear
his throat

“Ah, yes, hello...”

: offers a small wave to
the crowd

“Ah, well. Hmm.”

“I never expected to be
in front of a crowd
again, but this will do.
Yes, this will do just
fine.”

“When I was asked to
speak tonight, I wasn’t
exactly sure why. I’m
just an old man, an old
man that told a few
stories.”

“...not important, no,
not important... you were
the important ones...”

“I wasn’t sure what I
should say, I’m still not,
but I asked two questions
of myself.”

“One, what is a library,
why is this one
important?”

“That is a simple enough
question on the surface, I
suppose. A library is a
place to find books!”

: snorts with a bit of
self-amused humor

“Ah, but this library in
particular isn’t just
books, is it? No, this
library is OUR books.”

“Yes, OUR books.

Because in spite of what
the by-line might say on
any particular volume, the
books contained here are
OUR stories... Not mine,
not Isk’s, not
GreyPawn’s, Not
Joanna’s... Not even
Cear’s or Halister’s...

these books contain a
shared arc of storytelling
which weave and whisper
the passion of lives
lived..."

"Our stories of intimate
connection, I don't
mean... sexiness, though, I
suppose there is that
too. I only mean that
stories are what bind us
together in shared
experience. The intimacy
of connection. Those
experiences can be small,
maybe you met a girl on
the streets of Minoc as
a boy, you don't
remember her name... or
what she looked like, you
only remember the scent
that the wind greeted
you with as she passed,
or you remember the way
you felt when she
returned your smile..."

: looks a little lost and
stares blankly at the
floor for a moment

"...a small moment, not
an important one. Or
maybe the moment that
King Blackthorn welcomed
the first town council,
eh? That was a big
moment, yes, that was an
important moment."

: nods to himself and
those gathered

"But the moments in
these tomes reflect
generations of people,
some of whom are gone,
some of which remain,
some of which were
penned by tired old
men..."

"So, why is this library
important? ...That was
the first question, yes,
I'm sure that was it."

"This library is
important because it
houses the combined
efforts, the binding
stories, and the
connections between
people. That is why we

are all here, isn't it? To
feel connected, to share
moments of companionship
with a stranger in the
sincere hope that they
become a friend, yes?"

"So, here it is. Books
that chronicle that quest,
words from a thousand
souls, shouting into the
world, 'I am not alone!'
and they found out that
they weren't."

: shifts a bit

"There was another
question, yes?"

: coughs

"Oh, right, right... it
was, why me? Why should
I be the one to stand up
here and say something
about the importance of
stories?"

"That one is a bit more
difficult to answer than
the first. As a boy I fell
in love with my own
reflection, stupid boy...
but then I suppose the
stupidity of youth can be
forgiven by old men... as
a man I helped you weave
your own stories into a
context of moments, just
a storyteller, you all are
the important ones, you
always were..."

"...as an old man, I
prefer to be forgotten,
or when remembered,
fondly... rather than
foolishly. Britannia has
moved on from my
ramblings, and rightfully
so. The world belongs to
the young."

"Our shared friend, Mr.
Halister Marner has built
a monolith, a treasure of
our shared stories and
experiences. Sing his
praises, as it is your own
melody which will echo
back to you. This isn't a
building for him, this is a
gift, a gift to every
single one of us. A
passion, a nostalgia which

begs not to call us back,
but only to page through
and remember fondly.”

“We must remember
those that passed beyond,
hear their words, page
through their stories and
be curious about what
they whisper to us from
a generation ago, two
generations ago,
longer...”

“As I page through and
read this evening, and
many evenings in the
future...”

: pauses suddenly and
takes a weak breath

“...I will only ask one
more question...”

: licks his lips and blinks,
trying to stave off a
tear

“...I will ask...”

“Can’t we just go back
to page one and do it all
over again?”

: stands quietly for a
moment and nods to
Halister

: takes a step away from
the lectern